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CPYRGHT

'TOP SECRET' JOBS GIVEN 5 IN STATE DEPT.

Assigned 'Politically Explosive' Posts

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(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

Washington, March 18—Senate investigators learned today that five high-ranking employees of the office of security, state department, have been transferred to a special project described to them as "politically explosive."

The five employees in the special review branch which specializes in the evaluation of security risks were informed that their new assignment was "top secret" and admonished not to reveal it to anyone.

"This has been directed from top-side, including express directions from the White House," they were told.

The reassignment was effective last Monday. The "special project" was reported to involve an inquiry into the communist connections of aliens who associate with state department employees.

Hidden Significance

The transfer, in the opinion of investigators, had hidden significance. It marked the transfer from the bureau of security of the last four remaining members of the staff which once worked under Otto F. Otepka, former deputy director of the office of security.

This quartet was reported to have protested that the reassignment was, in fact, predicated upon their association with and support of Otepka, who was dismissed by the state department last year after he gave testimony to the Senate internal security subcommittee about lax security conditions in his bureau. Otepka is fighting his discharge but the state department has delayed giving him the hearing to which he is entitled under the law.

'Political Dynamite'

The Senate subcommittee and the state department have been engaged in conflict for two years. Scores of secret hearings have piled up bulky evidence on conditions in the state department. Two state department officials have been forced to resign after exposure of their perjury in these hearings.

Members of the subcommittee are now convinced that the state department is attempting to delay issuance of a subcommittee report until after the November elections. A Democratic senator described the evidence as "political dynamite."

Four of the five employees, now assigned to a "special project" and therefore removed from work in connection with security risks within the department itself, were original members of a staff organized in May, 1961, as the result of a directive issued in November, 1960, by then administrator of the security bureau, John W. Hanes Jr.

Reexamine Security Files

This staff was placed under the personal supervision of Otepka. Its mission was to undertake a reexamination of all security files of state department employees, beginning with top ranking officers. The files were to be up-dated and new leads sought for insurance that persons in a position to make or influence policy were not potential security risks.

The new review contemplated that careful attention would be given to more than 800 cases uncovered in the last review completed in 1956 by the late Scott McLeod, then security chief.

McLeod urged his superiors in the Eisenhower administration to pay particular attention to 258 of these cases where the evidence of communist connections, he said, was substantial, and the position held by the state department officer was at a top level. He warned against another Alger Hiss spy case.

166 Still in Department

When the subcommittee learned of this report, it was, at first, refused information by the state department. A reply has now been delivered.

it was learned, admitting that 166 of the 258 "serious cases" were still in state department employ and that a special two-man panel was reexamining the cases. The report expressed confidence that all those involved had been adequately "cleared" under security procedures.

The project initiated by Hanes, the last security chief under the Eisenhower administration, was suspended under the Kennedy administration and permanently abandoned in April, 1962.

Dissolution Is Accomplished

One member of the special review staff was transferred in January, 1964, to Memphis, Tenn., as an investigator. All others, since January, 1962, have been assigned to routine evaluations with respect to new state department employees. The dissolution of the staff has now been accomplished by transfer to the "special project."

Otepka, meanwhile, incurred the hostility of his superiors in 1961 by noting irregularities in the procedures used to clear William A. Wieand, a state department officer, who had a hand in shaping United States policy toward Cuba, both before and after Castro's takeover.

This was followed in 1962 by a clash with high officials over the granting of 152 security "waivers" by Secretary of State Dean Rusk to high-ranking state department personnel. This process, skipping the customary security investigation, had been invoked only five times during the Eisenhower administration.

In 1963, he was fired for "conduct unbecoming a state department officer" after he gave some classified material to the Senate subcommittee. He has remained on full salary, isolated in the state department, since he cannot be officially removed until he has the hearing which he has been denied for many months.